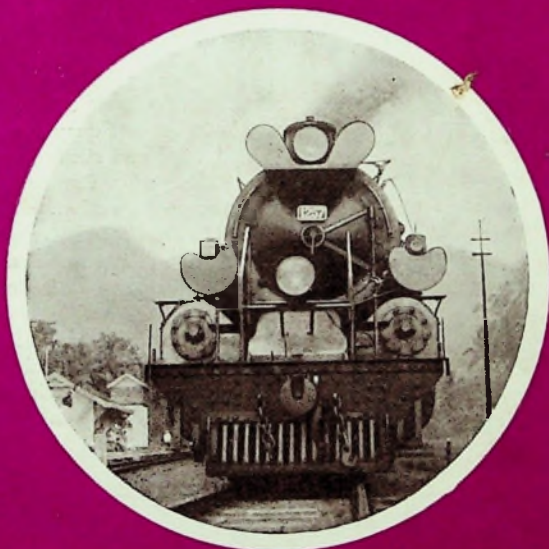


THE TRAVELLING POST OFFICE  
CAMBRIDGE AS A RAILWAY CENTRE  
THE SOUTHERN RAILWAY IN THE ISLE OF SHEPPEY

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# Railway Magazine



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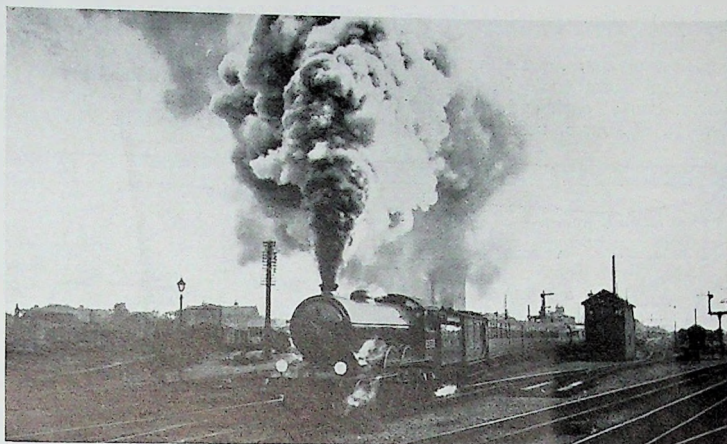


Photo.]

[J. A. Townsend

London express leaving Cambridge, L.N.E.R.  
Reboilered G.E. " B12 " class 4-6-0 locomotive No. 8579

## Cambridge as a Railway Centre

By S. P. W. CORBETT

CAMBRIDGE, owing to its geographical position, is of far less importance as an industrial centre than the sister university town. So far as its railways are concerned, Cambridge suffers from being situated on routes which lead to no place of any great size, and at the end of very lengthy branches. The Cambridge main line of the late Great Eastern Railway is the principal artery of traffic. This actually runs from south-west to north-east through the station, but for the sake of simplicity the two ends will be referred to as " north " and " south."

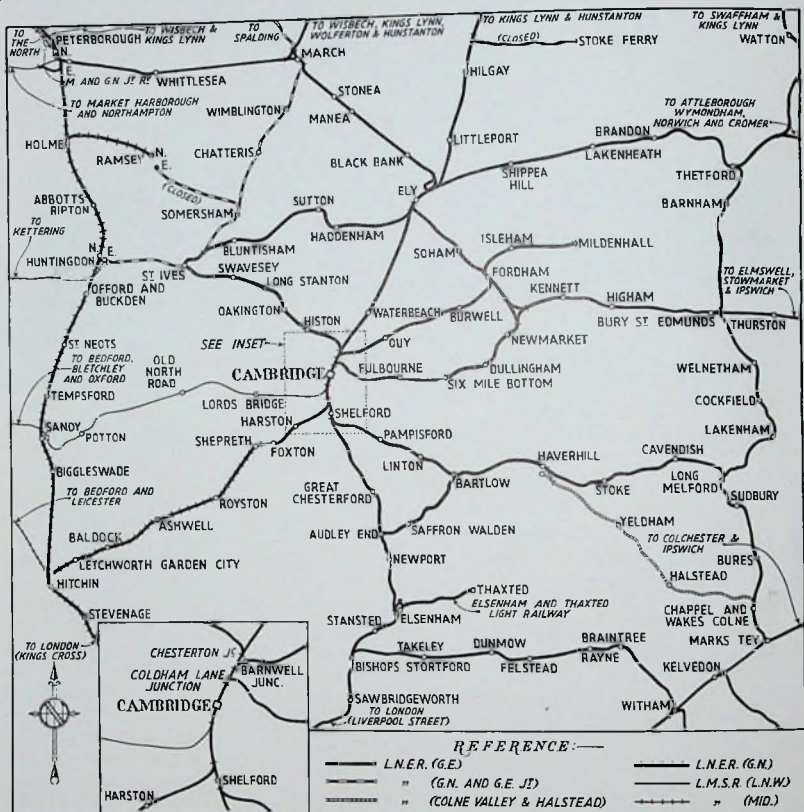
The main block of buildings at Cambridge is the same as when the station was opened in 1845, except that the booking office has been extended into what was once the covered carriage stand. On the walls of this building, both on the approach side and at the ends, are nineteen crests worked in stone. It is not known locally to whom they belong individually, but they are believed to be the crests of the land-owners through whose

property the Eastern Counties Railway ran. The original station consisted of one platform as at present. Some say that there was in addition a short island platform built about 1850, which remained in existence for several years, but the officials are unable to find any documentary evidence for it. In 1899 an Act was sought to provide powers for the rebuilding of the station with an island platform, but it was strongly opposed by both university and town in Parliament, as the opposers objected to using a footbridge, so that the Act was never passed. Since then the railway has made no attempt to inconvenience or weary its patrons by footbridge or subway, though the walk now necessary from the front coach of a long down train to the exit is just as tiring as either. The university authorities also insisted that the station should be not less than a mile from Great St. Mary's church, which is in the centre of the town. Queen Victoria is said to have supported this, fearing lest her son, an undergraduate at the time, might wish

to go up to London more often than was good for him.

As it now stands, the station consists of a main platform 1,625 ft. long, and four bays, two at each end. The main platform is, of course, used as two; the

approach to the south half of the platform. Up trains reverse the process. The chief objection to this type of lay-out is that up and down trains have to cross each other's path at least once. The method of working is satisfactory so long



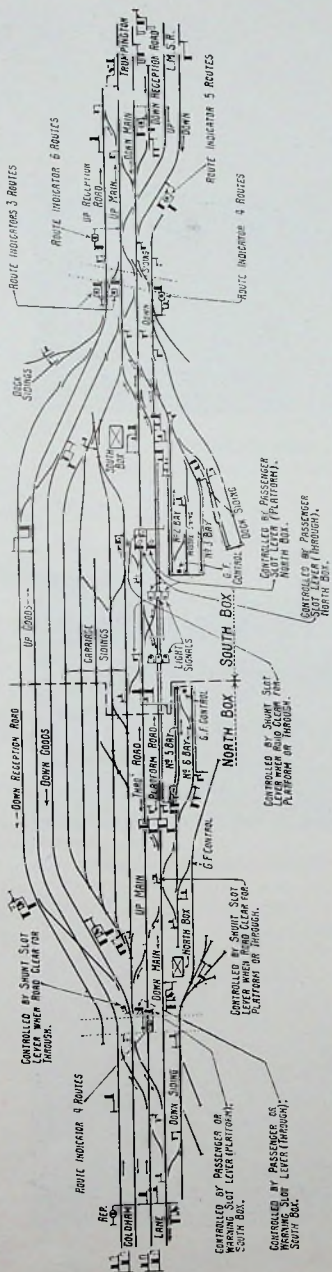
Map showing lines in the Cambridge area

platform line is connected with the through line by a scissors crossover midway, so that both halves can be used by up and down trains alike. The usual procedure for a down train is to run in on the through line and take the scissors crossing to the northern half of the platform. If it is very long, 13 coaches or more, it usually leaves the last one standing on the crossover, effectually blocking both the through line and the northern

as trains run in their proper course, but delay is frequently caused to those running late. It is also difficult to move empty stock without blocking one or other approach to the station.

The two bays at the London end of the station, Nos. 1 and 2, are used by the slow trains for Liverpool Street and Hitchin, by certain of the King's Cross buffet car expresses, and by the Haverhill branch trains indiscriminately, while the





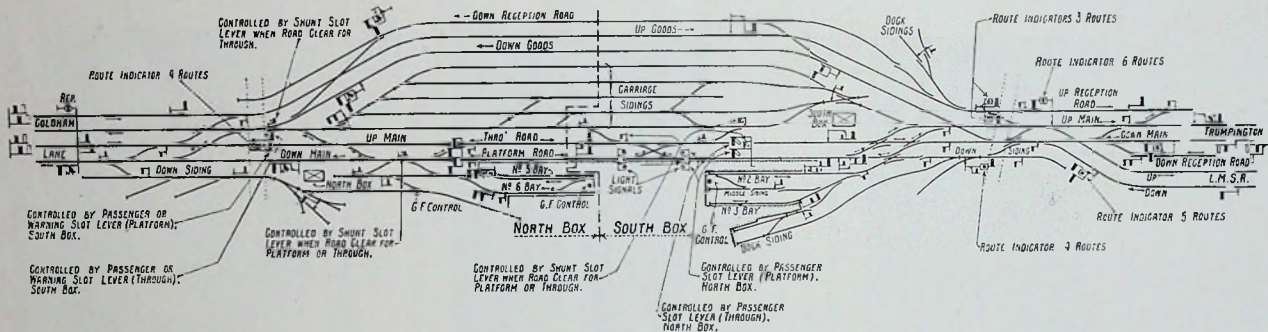
Plan of lines and signalling at Cambridge, L.N.E.R.

L.M.S. Bletchley trains nearly always use No. 1. The two north bays, Nos. 5 and 6, are used by the L.M.S. Kettering trains, L.N.E. Newmarket, March, and Ely line slow trains, and the Mildenhall branch trains, but at less busy periods these also occupy the main platforms. As at all big stations, there are certain particularly lively periods. One of these is between 3.50 p.m. and 4.20 p.m., when trains leave for every route radiating from Cambridge. The north end is also very busy about 10 a.m.

As will be seen from the plan, the goods accommodation is laid out on the same large scale as the traffic with which it deals. To the south of the station there are up and down reception lines. Down trains are held there until they can be allowed to cross the main lines to gain access to the goods lines, which pass round the back of the station sidings. These reception lines, which are controlled at the south end by Trumpington signal-box, also help to relieve the congestion between the station and the junction with the line from Hitchin. The station working is controlled by two signal-boxes, North and South; both are power-operated, and the rearrangement of the signalling carried out in 1926 was described in the *THE RAILWAY MAGAZINE* for March, 1927.

As far as train services are concerned, Cambridge suffers, as has been said, from its uncentral position. The service to and from London has been greatly improved by the introduction of the buffet car expresses on the King's Cross route. They have had the effect of diverting some of the traffic from Liverpool Street to King's Cross, since the latter is a more convenient station to reach from many parts of London. But much additional traffic has been created by these facilities, as is proved by the growth of the trains concerned. Originally designed for three coach trains, such is their popularity that their minimum load is normally five coaches—rarely four in midweek on certain trains—while on Saturdays it rises to ten, eleven, and even twelve of the latest type of coaches, which has a disastrous effect on punctuality, seeing that time-keeping is virtually impossible with more than eight, and even with the normal load hard work has to be performed by the

DECEMBER, 1934



### Plan of lines and signalling at Cambridge, L.N.E.R.



Photo.]

[D. S. Barrie

Cambridge station from the south ; bay platform on left



Photo.]

[S. P. W. Corbett

General view of Cambridge station and goods lines from Hills Road bridge



Photo.]

[S. P. W. Corbett

View of junction of L.M.S.R. Bletchley branch with L.N.E.R. main line



locomotives. At present these trains leave Cambridge at 9.25 a.m., 12.30, 3.30, 5.25, and 10.10 p.m., returning from King's Cross at 9.35 a.m., 12.40 (12.15 on Saturdays), 2.5, 8.10, and 11.40 p.m. They stop intermediately at Letchworth, Hitchin, and Welwyn Garden City, while the 9.25 a.m. and 10.10 p.m. up, and the 12.15 (Saturdays only) and 2.5 p.m. down, make an additional call at Royston. The 11.40 p.m. stops conditionally at Royston on Thursday nights only to set down. Other fast trains leave Cambridge for King's Cross at 8.26, 10.10 a.m., 2.4, and 6.20 p.m. Corresponding down trains depart from King's Cross at 12.40 (Saturdays only), and 9.55 p.m. (the latter runs through to Newmarket and Soham on Saturday nights), while the 3.0, 5.0, and 6.15 p.m. main line trains convey portions for Cambridge, detached at Hitchin.

The Hitchin line leaves the Liverpool Street main line 2.6 miles south of Cambridge, at Shepreth Branch Junction. This name is a legacy of the old Great Eastern, which built a branch as far as Shepreth, where an end-on junction with the Great Northern was effected. It was a unique feature of the intermediate stations of Foxton and Harston that they were owned by the Great Eastern, and yet never served by a Great Eastern train. At the junction trains to and from the Hitchin direction have to reduce speed to 30 m.p.h. Beyond the services mentioned in the last paragraph, the only other important trains to use this route are the royal trains between King's Cross and Wolferton, Newmarket race specials, and occasional excursions from King's Cross to Hunstanton, now composed of the latest tourist train stock. Most of these trains, when not stopping at Cambridge, take the goods lines through the station, but the royal trains run over the through passenger line next to the platform line.

The expresses on the Liverpool Street route are for the most part heavy, and convey portions for Hunstanton, Norwich and Yarmouth, and March. In proportion to the traffic carried, certain of these trains appear to be overloaded, and it is a moot point whether rearrangement of the stock workings might not allow the formations to be materially reduced, and

much-needed acceleration effected. The chief departures from Cambridge for Liverpool Street are 12.59, 7.48, 9.7, 10.1, and 11.15 a.m., and 12.58, 3.56, 4.45, and 7.7 p.m. Of these, the 9.7 a.m. and 12.58, 3.56, 4.45, and 7.7 p.m. trains carry restaurant cars, while the 10.1 a.m. now conveys a buffet car from Yarmouth, and the 11.15 a.m. one from Bury St. Edmunds, which return on the 2.37 and 4.45 p.m. from Liverpool Street respectively. In the down direction expresses leave Liverpool Street at 4.35, 8.30, 10.5, and 11.50 a.m., and at 2.37, 4.15, 4.45, 5.49, 7.10, 8.22, and 10.12 p.m., with restaurant cars on the 8.30 and 11.50 a.m., and 5.49 and 7.10 p.m. services. Cheap day tickets are issued from Cambridge to London on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at the cost of single fare (7s. 2d.), and on Thursdays and Sundays half-day tickets at the low cost of 4s. from noon till 4.45 p.m. All tickets are interavailable to Liverpool Street and King's Cross. To provide a return as late as possible for these excursionists, a fast express leaves Liverpool Street every Thursday night at 11.50 p.m., calling at Bishop's Stortford only, and due into Cambridge at 12.57 a.m. The 25.5 miles from Bishop's Stortford to Cambridge, beginning with the climb to Elsenham, are allowed only 27 min.—an average speed from start-to-stop of 56.7 m.p.h. This is considerably the fastest train on the G.E. route, and keeps excellent time, even though fairly heavily loaded. A train runs at the same time on Saturday nights, but calls at all stations from Broxbourne to Bishop's Stortford inclusive, and arrives at 1.15 a.m. There is in addition a good service of stopping trains.

On Sundays there is a through train from Liverpool Street to Doncaster, and *vice versa*, via March and Lincoln. The down train leaves Cambridge at 11.5 a.m. and the up arrives at 6.6 p.m. Other fast Sunday trains are the 5.8 p.m. from Cromer to Liverpool Street, due out of Cambridge at 8.27 p.m., and allowed 75 min. for the non-stop run to Liverpool Street, and the 8.30 p.m. return half-day excursion from Liverpool Street, taking the same time as the up train just mentioned, and now advertised to convey ordinary passengers. In summer an additional up express runs, booked non-stop



[Photo.]

[John M. Miller]

An unusual locomotive at Cambridge : G.C. 4-6-0 No. 6072 on Leeds excursion

from Norwich to Cambridge in 82 min. It is remarkable that a town of this importance should not be served on week-days by a single non-stop train from London, even though less than 60 miles distant. There have, however, been non-stop services in the past. Before the war, for many years the 11.5 a.m. and 4.30 p.m. expresses from Liverpool Street to York were allowed 73 min. for the non-stop run, and the 12.20 p.m. from St. Pancras to Hunstanton and Norwich reached Cambridge non-stop in 71 min. In the "radical alterations" of 1914 the best time from Liverpool Street came down to 70 min., but did not last for long.

We must next deal with the Newmarket, Bury St. Edmunds and Ipswich line. It leaves the main line to Ely at Coldham Lane Junction, about  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile north of Cambridge, and immediately traverses a very sharp curve, of such length that the branch runs for a time in a south-easterly direction, and of such sharpness as to necessitate a speed restriction of 15 m.p.h. When the branch was opened in 1851, it left the main line in the middle of the station. It was replaced by the line now in use in 1896, owing to the inconvenience of the exit across all the running lines and sidings at the station. The remains of the original embankment at the New-

market end can still be seen about a mile from Cambridge by the old route, but  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles by the new. At Coldham Lane Junction the actual connection is made with the goods lines only, so that trains have to cross over from them to the passenger lines between there and Cambridge.

The best eastbound train leaves Cambridge at 9.6 a.m., and takes 82 min. for the  $54\frac{1}{2}$  miles to Ipswich, inclusive of stops at Newmarket, Bury St. Edmunds, and Stowmarket. Another fast train leaves at 10.8 a.m., calling at Higham, Thurston and Elmswell in addition to the former places. On Wednesdays only an express leaves Cambridge at 12.25 p.m. for Bury St. Edmunds, stopping at Newmarket only; otherwise the next train is a slow train departing at 1.32 p.m., calling at all stations to Bury St. Edmunds, and connecting there with the York to Harwich through train. The only other fast train is the 6.9 p.m. ex Cambridge, the continuation of the 4.45 p.m. ex Liverpool Street, conveying the buffet car brought down on the latter. A rather slow connection is made at Bury St. Edmunds with the North Country Continental express for Harwich by the train leaving Cambridge at 6.37 p.m.

In the reverse direction an express corresponding to the 9.6 a.m. eastbound



leaves Ipswich at 8.25 a.m., and calls at the same places, taking one minute less. It affords an excellent service off the Continental from Parkeston Quay, which it follows 20 min. later. A semi-fast train departs from Ipswich at 12.29 p.m., and a good connection is made at Bury St. Edmunds by the Felixstowe to Sheffield express with that forming the 4.45 p.m. from Cambridge to Liverpool Street. There is one fast train each way on Sundays, at 9.22 a.m. from Ipswich, returning from Cambridge at 6 p.m. These trains are usually made up of all assortments of ex-G.E. stock, but standard L.N.E. sets are now provided on the buffet car service to and from Liverpool Street.

The services between Cambridge and Norwich, and Cambridge and King's Lynn, are for the most part slow, and beyond Ely light, the traffic being insufficient to warrant the running of faster trains. Some of the short runs are quite smartly timed, however; for example, the 2.7 p.m. from Norwich is allowed 24 min. for the  $20\frac{1}{2}$  miles from Wymondham to Thetford, and in the opposite direction the 7.10 p.m. from Liverpool Street, due out of Cambridge at 8.34 p.m., is allowed 18 min. for the  $14\frac{3}{4}$  miles from Thetford to Attleborough. This train, indeed,

makes the fastest weekday run from Cambridge to Norwich in 95 min., with five intermediate stops, and another conditional call on Saturdays. In the up direction the 2.5 p.m. is the fastest train, taking 104 min. with five stops.

The fastest overall time for the  $41\frac{1}{4}$  miles from Cambridge to King's Lynn is the 64-min. allowance of the 6.8 p.m. ex Cambridge (4.45 p.m. ex Liverpool Street), which runs on Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays only beyond Ely; the 4.5 p.m. (2.37 p.m. from Liverpool Street) takes 65 min.; but most of the trains stop at every intermediate station from Ely to King's Lynn and take about ten minutes more. One of the most insignificant, yet most important trains going north from Cambridge is the express at 9 a.m. to Ely, where connection is made with the northbound Continental, providing the best service from Cambridge to the Midlands *via* Peterborough, and the whole of the north of England and Scotland *via* Sheffield or York. The corresponding connection off the southbound train arrives at 7.59 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays, and 11 min. earlier on Saturdays. There are altogether 16 trains daily each way between Cambridge and Ely; on Sundays six down, and five up.



Photo.]

[John M. Miller

G.N. 4-4-2 locomotives Nos. 3255 and 3252 on King's Cross train leaving Cambridge, L.N.E.R.



Photo.]

[D. S. Barrie

Up train passing the L.M.S.R. (Western Division) engine shed at Cambridge  
G.E. 4-4-0 locomotive No. 8891

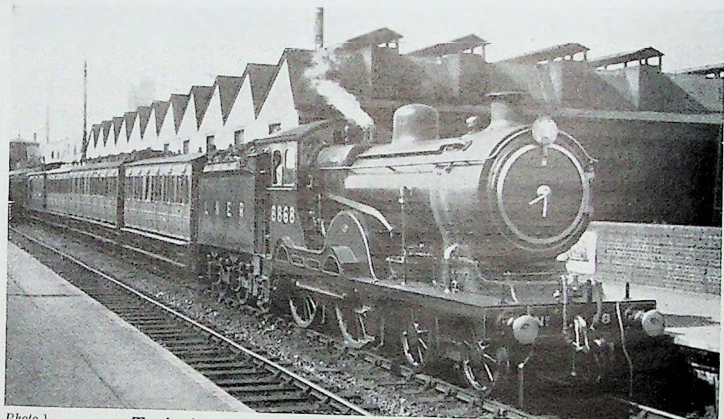


Photo.]

Train in bay at north end of Cambridge station  
L.N.E.R. engine shed on right

[J. A. Townsend

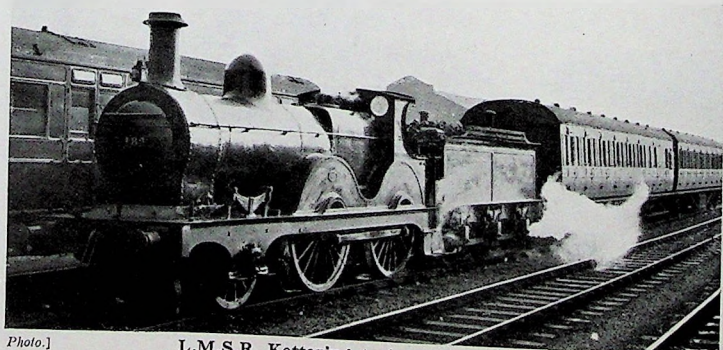


Photo.]

L.M.S.R. Kettering train at Cambridge  
Midland 2-4-0 locomotive No. 182

[D. S. Barrie



The other double line L.N.E. branch from Cambridge is that leaving the main line at Chesterton Junction two miles north of Cambridge. This goes to March *via* Chatteris, and is used by the L.M.S. branch trains as far as St. Ives, whence they follow the L.N.E. single line branch to Huntingdon East. The former G.N. & G.E. joint section started at St. Ives. All trains from Cambridge *via* Chatteris stop at every intermediate station. At March connections are made with the lines to Peterborough, Lincoln, and King's Lynn *via* Wisbech. It may be noted here that the through carriages off the 2.37 p.m. from Liverpool Street which formerly went to March *via* Ely, and to Peterborough, were diverted a few months ago to continue from March to Wisbech and King's Lynn.

On the L.M.S. Kettering branch there are three trains each way from Tuesdays to Fridays inclusive, and four on Mondays and Saturdays. This might be a possible route to the North, if the main line connections at Kettering were not so bad, and the journey on the branch not so long. Of the down trains, the 8.33 a.m. ex Kettering stops at every intermediate station and arrives at Cambridge at 10.16, while the 5.18 p.m. (which starts at 7.58 p.m. on Saturdays) stops conditionally to set down at stations between St. Ives and Cambridge. The other down trains and all the up are booked non-stop over the L.N.E. section from St. Ives to Cambridge and *vice versa* on a timing of 20 min. for the 14½ miles, inclusive of the severe service slack at Chesterton Junction. The local services from St. Ives to Huntingdon East are worked, of course, by the L.N.E.R.

The Western Division of the L.M.S.R. enters Cambridge immediately outside the station at the south end. It is double track from Sandy. The connections to the North suffer on this line also from over-long waits at Bletchley and from the closeness of the intermediate stations between there and Bedford. Thus the fastest time from Cambridge to Crewe, a distance of 157 miles, is 4½ hr. The writer believes that the closing of many of the stations between Bletchley and Bedford, and all between Potton and Cambridge—or their conversion into halts

—would enable fast trains to be introduced (most of the line is suited for high-speed running), whereby much of the traffic now lost to the roads might be won back. A fast morning and evening through service would then be possible each way between Cambridge and Oxford, in less than two hours, a facility much desired by the inhabitants of both universities. At present the journey takes about three hours, with a change and a long wait at Bletchley. The only through train is the 10.45 a.m. from Oxford, reaching Cambridge at 1.13 p.m.

The best departure from Cambridge to the North by this route is at 9.30 a.m., which connects at Bletchley with the 10.40 a.m. from Euston to North Wales and Carlisle. Other trains leave Cambridge at 7.40 and 11.8 a.m. (connecting with the 12.5 p.m. from Euston), 2.2, 4.42, and 6.25 p.m., the last-mentioned providing a service to Scotland by the Royal Highlander. Down trains arrive at Cambridge at 8.41 and 11.10 a.m. (a connection leaves Birmingham at 7.30 a.m.), 1.13, 4.53, 6.4, and 8.52 p.m. The best service from the North is by the 8.30 a.m. from Carlisle (12.43 p.m. from Crewe), which connects with the 4.53 p.m. arrival at Cambridge. There is also a new Saturday night train to Bedford at 9.25 p.m., returning at 11.50 p.m. All Cambridge trains are semi-fast from Bletchley to Bedford, the smaller intermediate places being catered for by additional trains to and from Bedford only. There are two services each way on Sundays.

Finally, there are two single line branches which have not yet been dealt with. One leaves the main Liverpool Street line about ¼-mile south of Shelford, the first station out of Cambridge, going *via* Haverhill and Long Melford to Mark's Tey, where the Ipswich main line is joined. This line is 6½ miles longer than the direct Colne Valley line, formerly an independent company, from Haverhill *via* Halstead to Chappel, the first station north of Mark's Tey, but trains from Cambridge all go *via* Long Melford to Sudbury or through to Mark's Tey. They are very slow, and the journey of 46½ miles to Mark's Tey



occupies slightly under two hours in one instance only. The other branch, from Cambridge to Mildenhall, starts halfway between Coldham Lane and Chesterton Junctions at Barnwell Junction. This station, although situated alongside the main line, has platforms on the branch only. Thereafter the branch runs roughly parallel with the Newmarket line as far as Fordham, where it joins and crosses the Newmarket-Ely line. There are four trains each way daily, with one extra on Saturdays. The last up evening train, however, travels from Fordham to Cambridge *via* Newmarket. The trains usually consist of three or four old six-wheelers, now comfortably refurbished and provided with corridor connections to permit the issue of tickets *en route*.

Goods traffic through Cambridge is very heavy, as there is a constant procession from March to the various East End depots in London. Many of the heavier trains use the Chatteris line between March and Cambridge, as the loops on that route are able to accommodate 90-wagon trains, whereas the Ely route loops can only take 55, and the latter carries more passenger traffic. Even at the least busy time of the year, in May and June, at least 75 freight trains pass through Cambridge every 24 hours. A considerable amount of fruit traffic is remmarshalled at Cambridge for the London depots during the summer months, and also potato traffic, which lasts through most of the year. Other seasonal traffic is provided by the beginning and end of university terms, naturally largely passenger. Certain trains are divided, and through carriages on the busiest days are run on the 9.0 a.m. from Cambridge to Manchester, Liverpool, and York. On these occasions the Liverpool and York portions of the Continental are run separately from Ely, with the Cambridge carriages attached. The L.M.S.R. also runs a special to Bletchley.

A large variety of passenger engines is to be found at Cambridge. There are five Ivatt Atlantics shedded there for working the King's Cross trains; two crews are allotted to each of four, one being kept spare, so that there is a link of eight drivers and eight firemen. This link is exactly the same as when the trains were first introduced; two men are from the old

G.N.R., one from the G.C.R., and the rest from the G.E.R. There is also a special link for the royal trains. This has three regular turns, one to King's Cross (leaving Cambridge at 2.4 p.m. and returning on the 6.55 p.m. from King's Cross), and two to King's Lynn, thus keeping the men acquainted with the whole road. When a big Atlantic is unavailable, a small "Klondyke" class 4-4-2, a "Sandringham" (B17) class 4-6-0, a G.E. 8500 (B12) class 4-6-0, or any variety of "Claud Hamilton" 4-4-0 is provided. One of those fitted with a Gresley boiler has recently arrived at Cambridge, No. 8816, and the drivers speak very enthusiastically of her capabilities. The royal trains are worked by the two "Super-Clauds" Nos. 8783 and 8787, painted green, and kept spotlessly clean. They are not allowed to be driven hard, to diminish the risk of a failure when working a royal train.

"Sandringham" and G.E. type 4-6-0's work the majority of the expresses between Liverpool Street, Cambridge, and Norwich, both from Cambridge and Stratford sheds. The reboilered examples now appear frequently, though there are none shedded at Cambridge itself as yet. "Claud Hamilton" class 4-4-0's work most of the Liverpool Street stopping trains, and also the Eastern Belle on her Hunstanton trip, larger types being unable to work between Ely and King's Lynn. This class, indeed, is the most ubiquitous in the district, as they also work regularly to King's Lynn, and to March, Norwich and Ipswich, but on the latter route anything from G.E. 2-4-0's to G.E. 4-6-0's and G.N. 2-6-0's are indiscriminately used. The engine workings north of Cambridge are sometimes very complicated. For example, a King's Lynn "Claud Hamilton" 4-4-0 works a train to March *via* Wisbech, then makes a trip to Peterborough and back, after which it continues to Cambridge *via* Ely, and so home with an express *via* the main line.

In addition to the types already mentioned, ex-G.N. 4-4-0's and an occasional Pacific appear on the slow trains to Hitchin and King's Cross, while the latter also work the Pullman race specials to and from Newmarket for the more important meetings. The Mildenhall branch trains are normally worked by G.E.

2-4-2 tanks, or 2-4-0 tender engines, which are also responsible for most of the Mark's Tey services. Newcomers to the shed are some of the G.N. type 4-4-0's cut down for working in Scotland. These have been noted on the 6.9 p.m. from Cambridge to Bury St. Edmunds, and on the Mark's Tey branch. G.E. 0-6-0 tanks are employed for shunting in the station, while Sentinel shunters are employed in addition in the yard. At times Wisbech tram engines may be seen in the shed sidings.

For working the Kettering branch the L.M.S. provide ex-Midland 2-4-0 and 0-6-0 classes. Probably the run to St. Ives is the last "express" service which these veterans still work regularly. Midland engines are housed in the L.N.E. shed at Cambridge; the Midland shed was closed a few years ago. The Western Division engines, however, have their own shed, at the south end of the station alongside the junction with the L.N.E.R.; it is a sub-shed of Bletchley. Ex L.N.W. "Precursor" 4-4-0 and "Prince" 4-6-0 classes are the most frequent visitors,

while "Experiment" 4-6-0's, "Cauliflower" 0-6-0's, 2-4-2 tanks, and Midland compound 4-4-0's appear with varying regularity. The L.N.E. shed was reconstructed last year, and now boasts a mechanical coaling plant. There is also a good repair shop.

At the beginning of October, Mr. P. N. Wright succeeded Mr. Aungier Peacocke, M.B.E., as stationmaster at Cambridge. Mr. Peacocke had occupied that position for 18 years, and had been in the service of the L.N.E.R. for 49 years. The stationmaster has under him 6 inspectors, 4 yard foremen, one station foreman, 11 ticket collectors, 2 parcels foremen, 8 parcels porters, 17 signalmen, 7 relief signalmen, 9 passenger and 40 goods shunters, and 23 porters, as well as a large clerical staff. In conclusion, the writer's thanks are due to Mr. Peacocke, Mr. Johnston, the District Control Officer, and to Mr. Robinson, the Assistant Civil Engineer, for their courteous assistance in providing information for this article, and also to Mr. F. I. G. Rawlins for help in the same direction.



Cambridge station in 1845